

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN'S JUSTICE
MARCH 17, 2003
MEETING MINUTES

Members Present: Judges John Holstein, Chair, Susan Block, Thomas Frawley, Glenn Norton, Vice Chair, Roy Richter, and James Welsh; Commissioner John Payne; Senators Roseann Bentley (for Nancy Rahmeyer), Pat Dougherty, Bill Foster and Anita Yeckel (for Peter Kinder); Representatives Catherine Hanaway, Bryan Stevenson, Yvonne Wilson; Julie Cole-Agee, Beth Dessem, Deanna Gallagher, Frank Martin, Steve Renne, Melanie Scheetz, Betty Sims, and Andrea Whitfield

Members Not Present: Patrick Lynn

Guest Present: Judge Thea Sherry, Chair of Child Abuse, Custody and Neglect Commission

Commission Staff Present: Gary Waint and Lynette Ricks

I. CALL TO ORDER/WORKGROUP BREAKOUTS & REPORTS

The Commission on Children's Justice was called to order by the Honorable John Holstein, Chair, in the Division II Courtroom, Missouri Supreme Court, Jefferson City, Missouri at 10:00 a.m.

The Chair introduced Steve Rolling, Director of the Department of Social Services. The Chair also announced that Senator Roseann Bentley is attending the meeting for Judge Nancy Rahmeyer.

The Commission then broke into the assigned workgroups.

At approximately 11 a.m. the full Commission reconvened.

The Chair called for approval of the minutes from the meeting of March 3, 2003. The minutes were approved as submitted.

II. CHILD WELFARE REFORM

Deanna Gallagher introduced Richard Wexler, Executive Director of the National Coalition for Children Protect Reform, a non-profit child advocacy organization. Mr. Wexler provided the Commission with a report regarding Missouri's child welfare. The report includes twelve recommendations.

Mr. Wexler stated that he believes that Missouri's child welfare system actually hurts children rather than helping them by placing too many children in foster care. Mr. Wexler also stated that social workers have too many cases.

Mr. Wexler provided copies of his written testimony.

III. ILLINOIS CHILD WELFARE REFORM

Steve Renne introduced Jess McDonald, Director of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services. Mr. McDonald provided a report on the Illinois Department of Children & Family Services, Child Welfare Reform.

Mr. McDonald advised the Commission that due to the reform in Illinois fewer children are in foster care, fewer children are removed from the home, permanency has increased, and that the duration of foster care has decreased. The reform was achieved through accreditation and privatization.

Mr. McDonald believes that kinship care is the best placement. The children return to the home sooner when placed in kinship care.

Mr. McDonald stated that a caseworker's salary begins at \$25,000 to \$35,000 a year and requires a bachelor's degree.

IV. FAMILY TO FAMILY: RESTRUCTURING FOSTER CARE

Steve Renne introduced John Mattingly, Senior Associate with the Annie E. Casey Foundation. Mr. Mattingly addressed "Family to Family" which began 10 years ago and is now in 32 cities.

Mr. Mattingly stated that too many children are in foster care and siblings are sent to separate homes. He recommended the Commission consider team decision making to focus on placement. He advised that foster care placement would lower.

V. INTERIM REPORT

The Chair requested each workgroup to present its recommendations. After the recommendations were heard, each member selected three recommendations from each of the four workgroups. Each member then ranked the three recommendations they chose by order of importance within each workgroup area. The recommendations chose by the Commission will be included in the interim report.

VII. NEXT MEETING/ADJOURNMENT

The next meeting will be held March 31, 2003, in the Division II Courtroom, Missouri Supreme Court, Jefferson City, Missouri.